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Friday, 14 June 2024, 4.50 p.m.

President: Mr Buzu

Signing of authentic texts on the abrogation of four Conventions

Mr Bormioli

The Clerk of the Conference

As you will remember, the Conference decided last week, by record vote, to abrogate under article 19 of the ILO Constitution four international labour Conventions, namely the Underground Work (Women) Convention, 1935 (No. 45), the Safety Provisions (Building) Convention, 1937 (No. 62), the Convention concerning Statistics of Wages and Hours of Work, 1938 (No. 63), and the Labour Inspectorates (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947 (No. 85).

These decisions by the Conference are reflected in formal documents that need to be authenticated by the President of the Conference and the Director-General before they are deposited with the United Nations for registration and sent to the ILO archives for safekeeping.

Therefore, I would now like to invite the President, together with the Director-General of the ILO and Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr HOUNGBO, to proceed with the signature of the authentic texts on the abrogation of the four Conventions.

(The President and the Director-General of the ILO sign the texts on the abrogation of the four Conventions.)

Closing statements

The President

The Conference has now concluded its business and has achieved its goals. The time has come for our closing ceremony.

I will call on each of my fellow Officers to make their concluding remarks to this assembly. I will begin by inviting the Employer Vice-President of the Conference, Mr DUBÉY, to take the floor.

Mr Dubey

Employer Vice-President of the Conference

It has been an honour to serve as the Employer Vice-President of this 112th Session of the International Labour Conference. Over the past two weeks, we have engaged in meaningful dialogue, shared perspectives and collaborated to shape outcomes and provide guidance on important and pressing issues in the world of work. I am grateful to have this moment to reflect on our shared achievements.

This Conference has once again shown the power of social dialogue to find mutually owned, tripartite responses to both challenges and opportunities, and the Employers' group is very happy with the outcomes. Let me share our assessment.

First, I would like to talk about the Standard-Setting Committee on Biological Hazards. In the context of occupational safety and health becoming a new fundamental principle and right at work, the Employers' group sees this first discussion on the subject as a unique opportunity

to craft a new instrument. It is our shared responsibility to consider, in a balanced and practical way, the perspectives of all constituents and to address all possible stakeholders in both developing and developed countries, and in both small and large companies, as well as all workers, whatever the nature of the workplace. The instrument needs to strike a balance between protecting workers and maintaining enterprise sustainability, and it must take a coherent, risk-based approach that can ensure adequate protection while minimizing labour market disruptions and allowing for adaptation to individual country situations. A Convention as detailed as the one being proposed may dissuade States from ratifying, especially those that could benefit the most from a new instrument. The Employers call for a clear distinction to be drawn between situations that are external in nature, like the pandemic, and situations where there is work-related exposure due to the nature of the work. We also support a clear and practical Convention based on principles rather than on too many technical details. We look forward to further consultations leading up to the second discussion and hope that, next time, the Committee will be able to deliver instruments that the Employers can promote and endorse for effective implementation.

Second, the Committee on the Application of Standards successfully completed its discussions on the General Report, the General Survey, the cases of serious failure to report and the tripartite examination of 24 individual cases. It also held a special sitting on Belarus, which provided the Committee with an opportunity to examine the long-standing case concerning the Government's non-compliance with the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), which has been dealt with by various ILO supervisory bodies. The Committee adopted conclusions that we hope will encourage the Government to make progress in the implementation of the recommendations issued by the Commission of Inquiry, some 20 years ago.

Furthermore, the Committee adopted the outcome of the discussion on the 2024 General Survey, *Labour Administration in a Changing World of Work*, which reflects the consensus that effective labour administration systems are vital for the good governance of labour matters, as well as for economic and social progress. They can make decent work a reality in the workplace by enforcing labour standards and can contribute to economic growth by increasing competitiveness and productivity.

Third, the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy addressed our collective responsibility to promote a robust and sustainable care economy as a vital component of the overall economy. This requires the support of businesses and the private sector. We emphasized that a well-supported care economy can lead to a healthier, more productive and agile workforce, as well as to enterprise competitiveness and innovation, and to more jobs and economic opportunities. Three pillars guided the position of the Employers.

The first pillar is skills. Employers worldwide struggle to attract and retain skilled care workers. This global challenge requires our immediate attention. Labour and skills shortages and mismatches affect both the public and the private care sectors, especially for modern care jobs that involve new technologies and advanced care techniques. The second pillar is gender equality. Care is often framed as a women's issue rather than a societal issue, implying that it is solely for women to solve or gender equality departments or organizations to address. While it is certainly linked to gender equality, investment in the care economy necessitates a whole-of-government approach owing to its interconnected and multi-faceted nature and the fact that it spans sectors such as healthcare, education, social services and employment. It also necessitates broad economic, social and fiscal policies. The third pillar is the role of private care

enterprises, which complement public services, reduce administrative and financial pressures on existing healthcare systems, drive innovation, and promote quality improvements. Private-sector involvement creates jobs, generates income and boosts entrepreneurship, especially for women, while offering diverse care options to suit different needs. It also leads to investments in care infrastructure, ensuring sustainability and quick adaptation to changing demographics and care needs. In addition, private-sector involvement provides training and employment opportunities and relieves skills shortages in the care sector. We are pleased that these three points are well reflected in the conclusions.

Fourth, the recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of the fundamental principles and rights at work (FPRW) covered a topic that is at the very core of the ILO. The Employers are pleased with the outcome document, which provides a solid framework to guide the actions of the constituents and of the ILO going forward, reinforcing the obligation of Member States to promote, respect and realize FPRW in line with the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as amended in 2022.

The discussions and conclusions include four central elements that the Employers fully support. First, the acknowledgement of the significant progress made since the previous recurrent discussion in 2017, with a view to taking stock and replicating best practices going forward. Proper acknowledgement of lessons learned and successes achieved is essential for meaningful progress. Key advances, such as the universal ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), or the elevation of occupational safety and health as the fifth FPRW, are inspiring examples. Second, despite the progress made, challenges linked to implementation gaps and root causes continue to be major impediments to the full realization of FPRW. The outcome document clearly calls on Member States, with the support of the ILO, to take decisive action to tackle root causes and promote formalization and good governance, and to adopt policies to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. This requires, to quote the outcome document, “political will, effective labour market governance and social dialogue”. Third, the conclusions rightly reaffirm the key role played by sustainable enterprises in advancing FPRW, and call for due attention to be paid and support provided to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Lastly, the conclusions stress the inseparable, interrelated and mutually reinforcing nature of the five fundamental principles and rights at work, and the importance of social dialogue as a key gateway to addressing challenges and seizing opportunities in the world of work.

Before I conclude, a few remarks on the launch of the Global Coalition for Social Justice are in order. The Employers welcome and strongly support this Global Coalition and we reaffirm our total and strong commitment to this movement. We are grateful for the ILO’s instrumental role in shaping this collaboration. Its efforts have laid a strong foundation for this well-designed and powerful Global Coalition which, under ILO leadership and with the participation of other United Nations organizations, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and stakeholders, has the potential to create real and profound change.

In closing, the Employers would like to express our gratitude to the President of the Conference for his leadership, to my fellow Vice-Presidents of the Conference, and to the Chairpersons of the different committees for their balanced, calm, and steady management. We would also like to thank the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the Government, Employers’ and Workers’ groups, and of course all participants in the deliberations – Workers, Employers and Governments. Credit for the success of this Conference also goes, in no small measure, to the outstanding and hard-working management and staff of the ILO, the Conference support staff, the interpreters and all others involved in the preparation and the smooth running of this intense, two-week session. And finally, the real success of this

Conference will now lie in the collective dedication of all participants and of the ILO, to carry forward the torch lit here and build a future that is characterized by social justice and decent work for all.

Ms Lestic

Worker Vice-President of the Conference (Original French)

I was privileged to have been elected Vice-President of this Conference and am grateful for this. Indeed, I have had the honour of serving as Vice-President of an exceptional session of the Conference which, despite heightened tension and instability throughout the world, took place in a constructive and dynamic climate.

The ILO's tripartite social partnership has once again demonstrated its ability to transcend sometimes contradictory thinking and find negotiated solutions and recommendations to face emerging challenges in the world of work.

First and foremost, the Conference has reaffirmed its commitment to multilateralism in providing responses to the most serious crises. For example, the special sitting on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories was necessary to discuss how we can help Palestinian workers in this critical situation. We cannot settle for words alone. We must act first and foremost to save and protect Palestinian lives, but also, within the ILO's mandate, to guarantee respect for the rights of Palestinian workers. We urge all governments to contribute generously, in solidarity with the Palestinian people, to the ILO's emergency response plan. Furthermore, we must implement without further delay, as the ILO, the United Nations General Assembly resolution granting Palestine rights similar to those of a Member State. It is time for Palestine to be considered a fully-fledged country within our Organization. This recognition is part of a political solution, which is the only guarantee of lasting peace. The demand for lasting peace in the world cannot be achieved without social justice, and this is what we wanted to reaffirm here through the discussion on a new social contract.

Once again, we welcome the stimulating Report of the Director-General on this topic, which enables the ILO, together with the Global Coalition for Social Justice, to mobilize in preparation for the upcoming United Nations World Summit for Social Development to take place in 2025. A renewed social contract is in fact necessary to better achieve social justice in the coming decades and to respond to people's aspirations by creating decent and climate-friendly jobs as part of a just transition. We must shape industrial transformation to achieve carbon neutrality and promote investment in economic and strategic sectors, such as the green economy and sustainable infrastructure, the care economy and the formalization of informal work. Our renewed social contract must deliver on the promise contained in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019), with its labour protection floor, which includes rights such as maximum working hours, as well as decent wages and occupational health and safety for all workers, irrespective of their status.

We must step up our efforts to achieve universal social protection, in particular by creating a social protection fund for the most disadvantaged countries. Our new social contract must guarantee equal pay for work of equal value and put an end to all forms of discrimination, particularly gender-based discrimination, the systemic nature of which can no longer continue. This social contract must create a rights-based development model which corrects the imbalances in power and wealth through full respect for freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, tripartism and social dialogue as essential means for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Declaration of Philadelphia, the 80th anniversary of which we are celebrating this year, reminds us with ever greater urgency that work is not a commodity, that freedom of expression and association is crucial for sustained progress, and that poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere. With the Global Coalition for Social Justice, under the leadership of President Lula da Silva of Brazil and the Director-General of the ILO, we have a collective responsibility to bring about a real change in the way in which the global economy and policy are thought of and organized. The Workers will contribute actively to this initiative.

I would now like to refer to the various decisions that we have taken. First of all, the Workers would like to comment on the abrogation of Conventions. We did not block the decision, but we would draw the Conference's attention to the fact that the ratification of more modern Conventions and new standards is lagging compared to the abrogation recommendations of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group. This is not in line with the mandate of the mechanism as agreed, and we wish to make this clear. Our group will not continue to support an exclusively deregulatory exercise. This goes against the ILO's mandate, and it is important that the ILO maintain and reaffirm its original standard-setting function.

I would also like to congratulate the colleagues involved in the Standard-Setting Committee on Biological Hazards, which finalized the initial negotiations on a global binding standard to protect workers against biological hazards. In particular, we welcome the broadened definition and scope which cover infectious diseases such as COVID-19, but also other diseases caused by exposure to biological agents, hazards and substances, as well as accidents and injuries, and references to precautionary measures and the inclusion of new and emerging hazards.

The general discussion on decent work and the care economy is a timely response to the demographic and epidemiological challenges that we are facing, and I would like to highlight here the importance in this discussion of equality. Care economy jobs are quite precarious, and it is mainly women who carry out such work. These jobs demonstrate the professional inequalities between men and women: low wages, poorly recognized professional skills, poor working conditions and arduous work. And the situation has further deteriorated as a result of the pandemic. It is thus crucial that these jobs be valued because care contributes to well-being and is a vital element to ensuring the sustainability of societies. Now we have a shared tripartite vision for the care economy which recognizes the primary responsibility of the State in care, which demands an integrated regulatory and political framework. This shared vision calls for an increase in public investment to guarantee decent work for workers in the sector. This is a major contribution to our vision of just transitions.

Furthermore, we commend the conclusions of the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. We welcome the fact that the ILO is now concentrating on promoting and protecting the fundamental principles and rights at work in two new crucial areas for the future of decent work. In fact, we must guarantee that the jobs created thanks to our transition towards an environmentally sustainable and digital economy benefit from the protection guaranteed by fundamental rights, and we look forward to seeing the ILO concentrate on the fundamental principles and rights across its work, including by structurally taking into account the recommendations of the supervisory system for all forms of work carried out by the Office in Member States.

At the beginning of this session of the Conference, the Committee on the Application and Standards held its first special sitting on Belarus, and we sincerely hope that this will open up

possibilities for engagement with the Government of Belarus. Similarly, we encourage all governments to fully commit to the implementation of the recommendations of this Committee. Once again, poverty and the unbridled exploitation of labour, wherever it exists, constitute a danger to prosperity and social justice everywhere, which is what we are trying to defend here.

Lastly, I would like to warmly thank the ILO teams for their organization and support throughout this session of the Conference, and I would like to thank the interpreters as well for enabling us to understand one another. Delegates, we are all an important national component of the ILO. But at the end of the session, our work is not finished. With renewed commitment and energy, we must now return to our respective countries and take on our own responsibilities to promote social justice wherever we can.

Mr Moyo

Government Vice-President of the Conference

Allow me to begin my remarks by offering our deepest condolences to the Government and the people of Malawi on the untimely and tragic passing of the Right Honourable Vice-President, Dr Saulos Klaus Chilima, and nine others who perished in a plane crash this past Monday when we started our deliberations. May their souls rest in eternal peace.

I would like to thank the President, Mr Buzu, most sincerely for his leadership and the excellent manner in which he has presided over this 112th Session of the International Labour Conference. I also want to thank and acknowledge the cooperation and dedication of my fellow Vice-Presidents, Mr Dubey and Ms Lestic, which made the work of our Conference much easier. In the same vein, special thanks go to the chairpersons of all the committees of the Conference. We had an opportunity to observe the arduous and painstaking work that was conducted. I must say that, in the short period I was in these committees, I witnessed in an excellent manner, the workings of tripartism. I wish to pay tribute to all the delegates for their commitment and dedication. Some worked very late hours in order to come up with the resolutions that were adopted by this Conference.

The 112th Session of the International Labour Conference marked the birth of the first standard-setting discussion on protection against biological hazards. We appreciate the outcomes, which will pave the way for the second discussion by the Conference next year. In the meantime, it is expected that the outcomes of the discussions will encourage Member States, even at this time, to come up with strategies to reduce accidents and injuries at places of work as we seek to create safe and healthy spaces for all workers.

The General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy focused on the recognition of work by paid and unpaid care workers. The Committee acknowledged the contribution of domestic workers, informal economy workers, persons with disabilities, women and youth in stimulating economic growth and job creation. The Committee also discussed the rural economy and its workers. For us in Africa, this is the major challenge that we face this century, and it might go on if we do not take remedial action in the next century. Going forward, it is important for the ILO to continue conversations on this important area, being mindful of the differences in national and regional contexts.

The work of the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work also brought to the fore the importance of human rights in the workplace and how they are inseparable, interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Although challenges in their implementation remain, our focus should be on the thematic priorities of paying due regard to informal economies, rural areas and situations of crisis and fragility.

With respect to the work of the Committee on the Application of Standards, we appreciate the discussions on how Member States can improve the application of fundamental Conventions and how to meet reporting obligations to the supervisory bodies. For this, the Committee examined country cases, and it is our hope and expectation that it will, in the future, also discuss cases of good progress in order to share best practices so that countries can improve and not only focus on the challenges being faced by Member States.

I wish to applaud the work undertaken in preparation of the inaugural session of the Global Coalition for Social Justice. In particular, I wish to salute the Director-General, not only for the initiative, but also for the manner in which it was organized. The Global Coalition has indeed gained momentum since its launch at the 111th Session of the Conference. The panellists and moderators of all sessions have provided us with insights on how we can work together towards the attainment of social justice, and it is with renewed vigour that we will return home after the electrifying, inspiring and passionate speeches of the President of Nepal, His Excellency Ramchandra Paudel, and the President of Brazil, His Excellency Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. In particular, we take note of their calls to: address inequalities and promote social justice; eradicate poverty by redoubling our efforts towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals; address the causes of climate crisis and its mitigation through climate financing, especially by those in the Global North; and restructure the international financial architecture and the democratization of the United Nations systems of governance, including that of the ILO. We think that this will demonstrate that countries, such as those in Africa, can also participate in regular sittings in the governing councils. Furthermore, we welcome Brazil's commitment to ratifying the 1986 Instrument of Amendment to the ILO Constitution. We also take note of the call to narrow the gap that exists between and within countries, as we strive towards leaving no one, no country and no social group behind.

The discussions we have had in plenary and in the committees have been fruitful. As a result of excellent preparation and presentation by the Director-General and his staff and the Chairperson and Officers of the Governing Body, the Report of the Director-General to this session of the Conference, which focused on renewing the social contract, informed all the discussions we had and has reinvigorated our desire to make meaningful and sustained social dialogue, upon which basis we develop our economies and our societies. An overwhelming majority of speakers from the Government, Employers' and Workers' groups deplored the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories. For anyone with a good heart and sense of humanity, it is clear that the war must stop, and the occupation should come to an end.

As I conclude my remarks, I wish to pay special thanks to the Secretariat for its dedication and guidance as we chaired all these sessions as Officers of this Conference. Mr Bormioli and his team were punctual, and they led us, informed us and guided us, and the success that might come to us is their success.

Finally, I wish to express my profound gratitude to the Africa group, the Government group and the Employers' and Workers' groups for having endorsed my nomination and for granting me the opportunity to serve as the Government Vice-Chairperson of the 112th Session of the International Labour Conference. It has been an enlightening and humbling experience for me personally, and an honour for the tripartite Zimbabwean delegation to serve you.

Mr Hounghbo

Director-General of the International Labour Office and Secretary-General
of the Conference
(Original French)

We are now – some may say “finally” – reaching the end of this session of the Conference. It has been intense, productive, and rich in debates. I do hope that you will all return home with the feeling of satisfaction that results from a job well done. In terms of statistics, 37.8 per cent of our delegates this year were women, which is somewhat less than what we were aiming for, but a little more than the 36.5 per cent we had last year.

We have had the opportunity to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Declaration of Philadelphia, whose principles are just as important today as they were in 1944 and after the war.

The discussion in the special plenary sitting on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, particularly in Palestine, was a solemn occasion. As a specialized agency, the ILO must consider the follow-up to the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 May this year. During the special sitting, there was an urgent call for collective action to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinians, and a reaffirmation of the strong role that the ILO is duty-bound to play. We are fully aware that the task facing the ILO in Palestine is immense and that we need to plan for a rapid, job-rich recovery based on human rights and workers' rights, even as humanitarian action is still ongoing. We of course remain firmly committed to collaborating with all colleagues throughout the United Nations system, including by providing technical support in the context of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, with a view to achieving lasting peace.

Please allow me to convey my sincere thanks to the donor countries that have begun to pledge funds for our three-phase project that was presented on Monday. As of yesterday, we had already received US\$10 million in pledges – half of the \$20 million that we are seeking. I would also like to take this opportunity to call upon all those who have not yet done so – I know that you have all been very busy with the Conference – to think about the difference that the ILO can make to the Palestinians, whether in Gaza or the West Bank.

In the face of insecurity and inequality as well as persistent informality, the discussion of my report, *Towards a renewed social contract*, has confirmed one key message: inaction is simply not an option. You have responded to my call to renew the social contract and to discuss it in depth in order make progress in social justice as the basis for lasting peace, shared prosperity, equal opportunities and a just transition.

Throughout our discussion, concerns were raised about a loss of trust in our governance systems, both national and multilateral. We must re-establish trust in our institutions and protect the independence of workers' and employers' organizations. In all countries and globally we have a duty to reinvigorate social dialogue and strengthen our standard-setting mandate, which I believe remains the backbone and the *raison d'être* of this Organization. As confirmed in our discussion with the co-facilitators of the World Summit for Social Development, the ILO has a crucial role to play in making multilateralism inclusive, particularly at the second World Summit.

Turning now to the work of the committees, I will be brief, as the Vice-Presidents have already commented on it. On behalf of the Secretariat, I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who have worked in the committees, starting with the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons, to achieve successful outcomes, with less stress than last year. I am grateful

for the rich discussions you have held, which bode well for successful discussions next year, both for the Standard-Setting Committee on Biological Hazards and others on the agenda, such as the discussion on the platform economy. As we know, that will be an important discussion, and the stakeholders and the Office are already hard at work preparing for it.

Also on the subject of the committees, the Office laments the fact that, for the first time ever, a vote was conducted in the Committee on the Application of Standards. That is highly regrettable, but we must continue working together in order to promote the values that our institution embodies on a daily basis for the improvement of the living and working conditions of all workers worldwide.

As to standards, over the past two weeks, we have received nearly 20 new ratifications, including five of fundamental Conventions, five ratifications of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), and four ratifications of Conventions on occupational safety and health, as well as some other Conventions. A total of nearly 20 ratifications were registered in the last two weeks and I wish to express my gratitude.

The inaugural Forum of the Global Coalition for Social Justice yesterday was clearly a success but, for us, this work is just beginning. We need to finalize the set-up of Sana De Courcelles' and Laura Thompson's team, the thematic areas and plan of action, not only for the ILO, but also for all the members or partners of the Coalition so that in 2025 we can begin truly to make a difference. As I said yesterday, action must be focused on making a real difference on the ground.

I would like to extend my thanks to the authorities of Nepal and Brazil, as we were honoured at our special day yesterday with the presence of two Heads of State. President Paudel of Nepal reminded us that there cannot be social justice without climate justice, and that lasting peace can only be achieved if there is shared prosperity. We also welcomed President Lula da Silva of Brazil, who strongly advocated for peace and encouraged us to sow the seeds of justice to cultivate peace across the globe. He recalled that attacks against democracy have always violated the law, human rights and labour rights, and underscored the need for a renewed social contract, which must place human beings at the heart of its policies.

To conclude – and I do know we are all tired, so I will be brief – I would like to thank the President and Vice-Presidents for the leadership they have demonstrated over the past two weeks. The success of these sittings and this Conference is also down to them. I thank them for their patience, especially in terms of time management and setting the atmosphere, which was not always easy, and also for allowing us to finish at a reasonable hour after these two weeks. I would also like to thank all of my colleagues from the Secretariat. I will not mention any individual names because it really is the work of a team. Nevertheless, I would like to mention in particular the interpreters, the security guards, the technicians and all those involved with the logistics, without whom we could not have achieved these outcomes.

Mr Buzu

President of the 112th Session of the Conference

Let me start by thanking you for entrusting me with this high position. I am honoured, my team is honoured and I think my country is honoured as well. I hope that I have lived up to your high expectations. I also want to thank the Officers of this Conference, my “partners in crime”. The fantastic team of the ILO in the Secretariat. The Director-General should be proud of the team and also of the ILO team in my country, the Republic of Moldova.

We hold this Conference in challenging times for everyone represented in this room, workers, employers and governments alike. Despite advances in recent years, gender inequality and discrimination hinder the participation of women in the job market. There is no slowing down the epidemic of work-related accidents, stealing the lives of over 3 million workers every year. New hazards challenge the world of work. Millions face insecurity and loss of livelihoods due to war and conflict. Employers, too, are grappling with the disruption of supply chains and shifting market demand, while governments continue to be under pressure to balance economic recovery with addressing social inequalities.

Speaking of the ideal of social justice in such complicated times may seem ambitious and even unattainable. Yet the ILO has demonstrated over time that it is precisely during difficult times that its role has been most instrumental. We talked about the Declaration of Philadelphia during this session of the Conference. Like me, I am sure that many of you were moved by the humanistic principles enshrined in the Declaration: the principle that labour is not a commodity, that freedom of expression and association are essential, and that poverty anywhere is a danger to prosperity everywhere. The Declaration is even more revolutionary considering that it was written at one of the darkest hours for humanitarianism. Its signature marked a turning point for the ILO and for the Member States, giving a clarity of direction and guiding a process for dynamic development in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Challenging times expose our vulnerabilities, but also present opportunities to address them. This is why the Director-General's new initiative, the Global Coalition for Social Justice, could not have come at a better time. It is heartening that over 280 actors and stakeholders across the board have recognized the need for change and have joined forces to advance a more equitable future for workers around the world.

I was with the ILO's internal historian, on the floor of the ILO building where you have the portraits of all the ILO Directors-General, and the historian was presenting them to me and saying that this Director-General promoted the Declaration of Philadelphia, this Director-General advanced the concept of decent work, and so on. Then I thought of the present Director-General, and it occurred to me that, in the future, his portrait will be there. Then the internal ILO historian will tell a fellow visitor or minister that this Director-General promoted social justice. Nothing would make me prouder than to help him to achieve this legacy of his. And I hope I speak on behalf of all the people present in this auditorium.

The Conference also addressed two critical issues for the world of work. The first is the care economy. As we know, women continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care work, significantly impacting their participation in the labour market. Gender stereotypes in many regions reinforce the expectation that women should prioritize caregiving over paid employment. Gaps in access to social protection programmes are especially pronounced for women in rural, marginalized and crisis-affected areas, where displacement and loss of livelihoods further exacerbate vulnerabilities. The new ILO report on the care economy will provide helpful guidance for governments in addressing this key issue.

Another critical aspect is the threat of biological hazards. The world has witnessed first-hand the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with other epidemics like Ebola. These hazards pose a significant risk to workers' health and safety, leading to severe disruptions in the workplace and the broader economy. I want to thank the Standard-Setting Committee on Biological Hazards for its important discussions on the upcoming new standard ensuring that workers are better safeguarded against these threats.

Allow me to thank all the committees for their tireless work and dedication. They truly did a good job and should be proud of the work they put in here.

In my other life, I am the Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova. Over the past two years, like never before, my country has mastered the art of turning adversity into purpose and mission, and self-concern into solidarity and friendship. After two challenging years, holding the presidency of the International Labour Conference holds a deep significance. It confirms that we belong on the global stage and that we can have a say. It motivated us to exceed the expectations we set ourselves, strengthening compliance with ILO standards, implementing and enforcing the hierarchy and pressing forward for decent work for all as we move towards our goal of European Union integration by 2030. I am grateful to the Director-General for having found the time to visit my country and for providing valuable support and guidance.

I am sure that, like myself, you feel a strong sense of pride in being here today, representing your countries and brainstorming in the international arena on what needs to be done in order to achieve more results for our citizens. Let us remember this empowered feeling. Let us never forget it. As leaders in our field, it is crucial to be aware that the power we hold is not merely symbolic. It gives us a real opportunity to create change. So let us use this opportunity.

Geneva is not Las Vegas: what happens in Geneva should not stay in Geneva. We should go back to our homes and countries and spread what we have achieved all over the world. In the pursuit of a better world of work, there is no need to hold back.

Mr Hounqbo

Director-General of the International Labour Office and Secretary-General of the Conference

I am sure that all delegates will agree with me that we cannot let the President leave without thanking him for his great leadership over the last two weeks. Therefore, I would like, on behalf of everyone here, to present him with this engraved gavel by which to remember us and as a token of our appreciation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the members of the delegation of the Republic of Moldova for having hosted me during my recent visits to the country and to reiterate my support to them. I would like to thank them again for a really rich discussion and for their work with the ILO teams from Budapest and Geneva.

Also, before closing, I would like to pay tribute to Georges Politakis, the Legal Adviser of the ILO. He will be retiring at the end of August, so this session of the Conference will be his last. He has worked with so many of us over the years. I wish him well and would like to invite all those present to give him a round of applause.

(Applause.)

The President

This session of the Conference will leave an important mark in the life of our Organization, as it will affect the lives of millions of people around the world for the better. Let us make sure of that.

This year again, we found a way to overcome differences in our views and to reach consensus through dialogue and compromise. We adopted conclusions with a view to developing standards concerning biological hazards in the working environment, to promoting policies to enhance the care economy and to reaffirming our commitment to the respect of fundamental rights at work.

The Conference and the 300 partners of the Global Coalition for Social Justice expressed their strong commitment to promote social justice through strengthened cooperation for concrete action. We can congratulate ourselves for these achievements.

I now declare the 112th Session of the International Labour Conference closed.

(The 112th Session of the Conference adjourned sine die at 6 p.m.)